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BEAUTIFUL  
LADY



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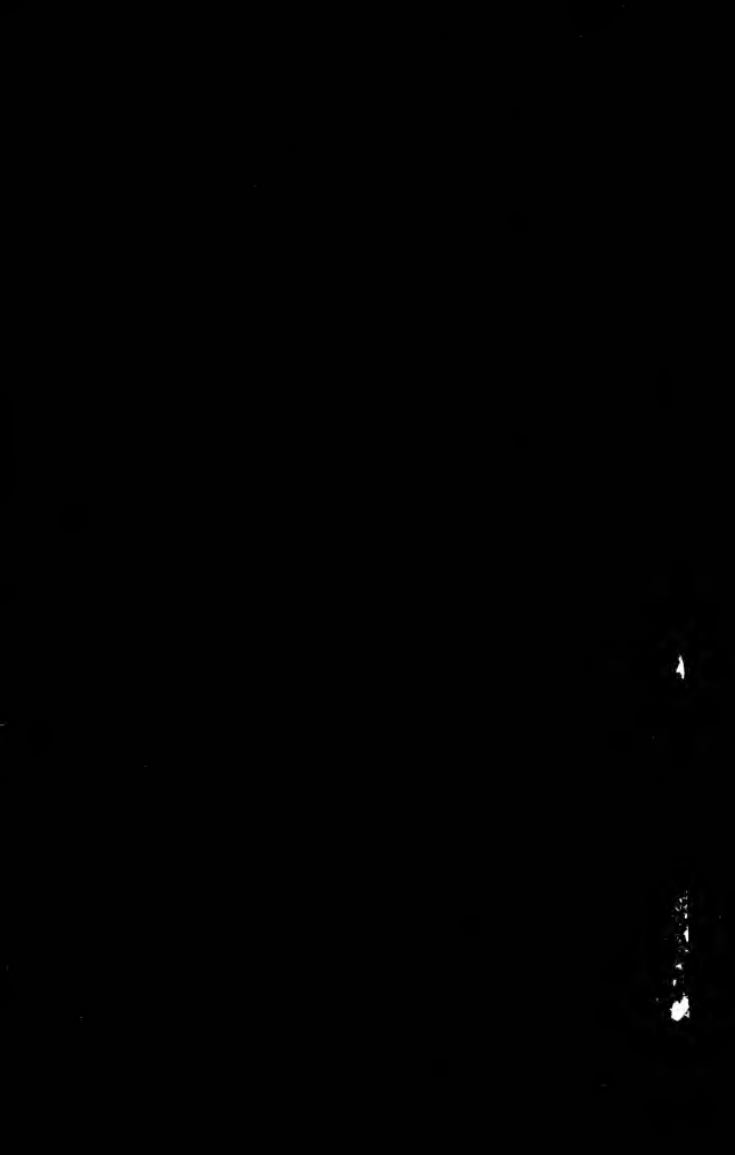
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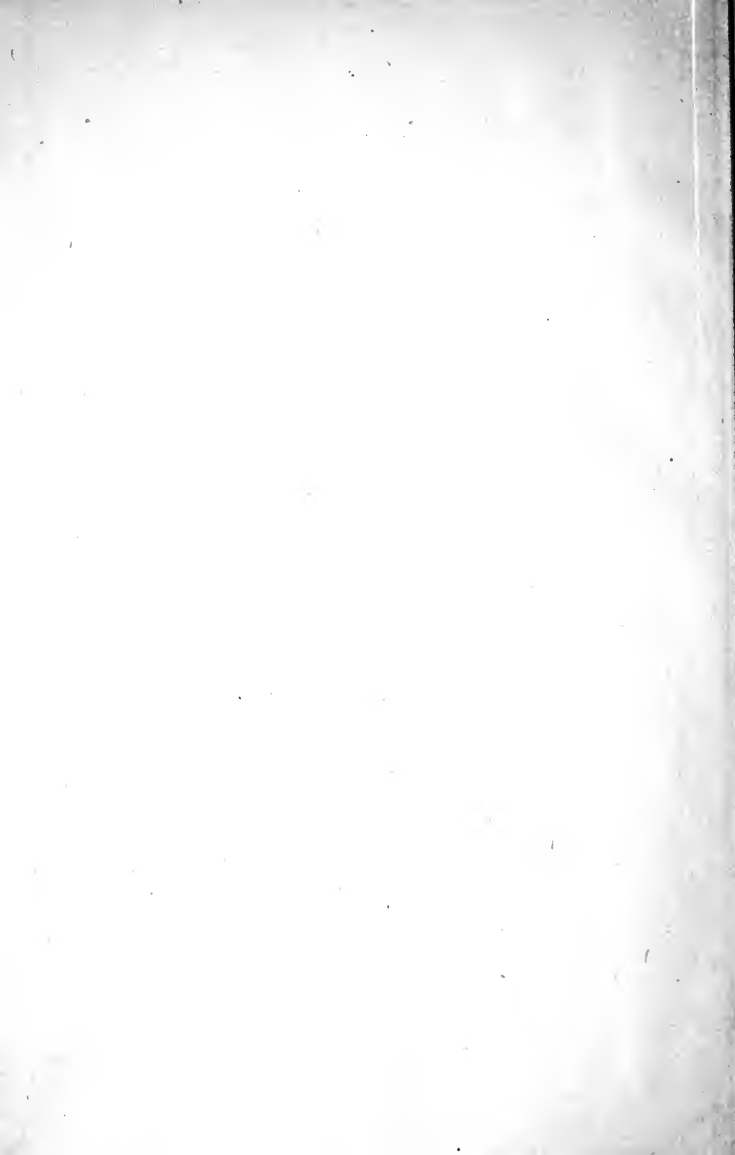
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MY BEAUTIFUL LADY



# MY BEAUTIFUL LADY

BY

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## INTRODUCTION



## MY BEAUTIFUL LADY

IN some there lies a sorrow too profound  
To find a voice or to reveal itself  
Throughout the strain of daily toil, or thought,  
Or during converse born of souls allied,  
As aught men understand. And though mayhap  
The cheeks will thin or droop, and wane their eyes'  
Frank lustre ; hair may lose its hue, or fall ;  
And health may slacken low in force ; and they  
Are older than the warrant of their years ;  
Yet they to others' seeing gild their lives  
With cheerfulness, and every duty tend,  
As if their aspects told the truth within.

But they are not as others : not for them  
The bounding pulse, the ardour of desire,  
The rapture and the wonder in things new ;  
The hope that palpitating enters where  
Perfection smiles on universal life ;  
Nor do they with elastic enterprise  
Forecast delight in compassing results ;  
Nor, having won their ends, fall godlike back  
And taste the calm completion of content.  
But in a sober chilled gray atmosphere  
Work out their lives ; more various though they are  
Than creatures in the unknown ocean depths,  
Yet each in whom this vital grief has root  
Is dull to what makes everything of worth.  
And though, maybe, a shallow bodily joy  
Oft tingles through them at the breathing spring,  
Or first-heard exultation of the lark ;  
Still that deep weight draws ever steadily  
Their thoughts and passions back to secret woe.  
Though, if endowed with light, heroic deeds

May be achieved ; and if benignly bent  
May be a treasured blessing through their lives ;  
Yet power and goodness are to them as dreams,  
And they heed vaguely, if their waking sight  
Be met with slanting storm against the pane,  
Or sunshine glittering on the leaves that play  
In purest blue of breezy summer morns.

Whence springs this well of sadness so profound,  
Unfathomable to plummet cast by man?  
Alas ; for who can tell ! Whence comes the wind  
Heaving the ocean into maddened arms  
That clutch and dash huge vessels on the rocks,  
And scatter them, as if compacted slight  
As little eggs boys star against a tree  
In wanton mischief ? Whence,—detestable  
To man, who suffers from the monster-jaws,—  
The power that in the logging crocodiles'  
Outrageous bulk puts evil fire of life ?  
That spouts from mountain-pyramids a flood

Of lava, overwhelming works and men  
In burning, fetid ruin?—The power that stings  
A city with a pestilence: or turns  
The pretty babe, who in his mother's lap  
Babbles her back the lavished kiss and laugh,  
Through lusts and vassalage to obdurate sin,  
Into a knife-armed midnight murderer?

Our lives are mysteries, and rarely scanned  
As we read stories writ by mortal pen.  
We can perchance but catch a straying weft  
And trace the hinted texture here or there,  
Of that stupendous loom weaving our fates.  
Two parents, late in life, are haply blessed .  
With one bright child, a wonder in his years,  
For loveliness and genius versatile:  
Some common ill destroys him; parents, both,  
Until their death, are left but living tombs  
That hold the one dead image of their joy.  
A man, the flower of honour, who has found



His well-beloved young daughter fled from home,  
Fallen from her maidenhood—a nameless thing  
Tainting his blood. A youth who throws the strength  
Of his whole being into love for one  
Answering him honeyed smiles, and leaves his land  
For some far country, seeking wealth he hopes  
Will grace her daintily with choice delights,  
And on returning sees the honeyed smiles  
Are sweetening other lips. A husband who  
Has found that household curse—a faithless wife.  
A thinker whose far-piercing care perceives  
His nation goes the road that ends in shame.  
A gracious woman whose reserve denies  
The power to utter what consumes her heart.  
Such instances, (and some a loss to know,  
Which steadfast reticence will shield from those,  
Debased or garrulous, whose hearts corrupt,  
But learn the gloomy secrets of their kind  
To poison-tip their wit, or grope and grin  
With pharisaic laughter at disgrace)—

Such instances as these demand no guide  
To thrid the dismal issues from their source !  
But others are there, lying fast concealed,  
Dark, hopeless, and unutterably sad,  
Which have not been, and never may be known.

Then we may well call happy one whose grief,  
Mixed up with sacred memories of the past,  
Can tell to others how the tempest rose,  
That struck and left him lonely in the world ;  
And who, narrating, feels his sorrow soothed,  
By that respectful love which sorrow claims.

It much behoves us all, but chiefly those  
Whom fate has favoured with an easy trust,  
To keep a bridle on our restless speech  
And thought : and not in flagrant haste prejudge  
The first presentment as the rounded truth.  
For true it is, that rapid thoughts, and freak  
Of skimming word, and glance,—more frequently

Than either malice, settled hate, or scorn,—  
Support confusion, and pervert the right ;  
Set up the weakling in the strong man's place ;  
And yoke the great one's strength to idleness ;  
Pour gold into the squanderer's purse, and suck  
The wealth, which is a power, from their control  
Who would have turned it unto noble use.  
And oftentimes a man will strike his friend,  
By random verbiage, with sharper pain  
Than could a foe, yet scarcely mean him wrong ;  
For none can strip this complex masquerade  
And know who languishes with secret wounds.  
They whom the brunt of war has maimed in limb,  
Who lean on crutches to sustain their weight,  
Are manifest to all ; and reverence  
For their misfortunes kindly gains them place :  
But wounds, sometimes more deep and dangerous,  
We may in careless jostle through the crowd,  
Gall and oppress, because to us unknown.  
Then, howsoever by our needs impelled,

Let us resolve to move in gentleness ;  
Judge mildly when we doubt ; and pause awhile  
Before injustice palpably proclaimed  
Ere we let fall the judgment stroke : toward  
Their ignominious craft, who ever wait  
To filch another's right, we will maintain  
Majestic peace in silence ; knowing well  
Their craft takes something richer from themselves.  
It is but seemly to respect the great ;  
But never let us fail toward lowly ones ;  
Respecting more, in that they lack the force  
To claim it of the world. For souls there are  
Of poor capacities, whose purpose holds,  
Throughout their unregarded lives, a worth,  
And earnest law of fixed integrity,  
That were an honour even unto those  
Whose genius marks the boundaries of our race.

**PART THE FIRST**



## LOVE

Love comes divinely, gladdening mortal life,  
As sunrise dawns upon the gaze of one  
Bewildered in some outland waste, and lost :  
Who lonely faint and shuddering through the night  
Heard savage creatures nigh ; and far-off moan  
Of tempests on the wind.

### Auroral joy

Flushes the brow of childhood, warms his cheek  
To rosier redness at the name of Love ;  
And early thoughts awake, in darkness strive ;  
As unfledged nestlings move their sightless heads  
At sound, toward a fair world to them unknown.  
Young Hope scales azure mountain heights to gaze,

In Love's first golden and delicious dream.  
He sees the earth, a maze of tempting paths,  
For blissful sauntering mid the crowded flowers  
And music of the rills. No ambushed wrongs,  
Or thwarting storms there baffle and surprise ;  
But lingering, man treads long an odorous way ;  
And at the close, with Love clasped hand in hand,  
Sets in proud glory : thence to rise anon  
With Love beyond the stars and rest in heaven.

Man, nerved by Love, can steadily endure  
Clash of opposing interests ; perplexed web  
Of crosses that distracting clog advance :  
In thickest storm of contest waxes stronger  
At momentary thought of Home, of Her,  
His gracious Wife, and bright-faced Joys.

To him

The wrinkled patriarch, who sits and suns  
His shrunken form beneath the boughs he climbed  
A lissom boy ; whence comes that brooding smile,



Whose secret lifts his cheeks, and overflows  
His sight with tender dew? What through his frame  
Melts languor sweeter than approaching sleep  
To one made weary by a hard day's toil?  
It is the memory of primal love,  
Whose visionary splendour steeped his life  
In hues of heaven; and which grown open day,  
Revealing perilous falls, his steps confined  
Within the pathways to the noblest end.  
Now following this dimmed glory, tired, his soul  
Haunts ever the mysterious gates of Death;  
And waits in patient reverence till his doom  
Unfolding them fulfils immortal Love.

As from some height, on a wild day of cloud,  
A wanderer, chilled and worn, perchance beholds  
Move toward him through the landscape soaked in gloom  
A golden beam of light; creating lakes,  
And verdant pasture, farms, and villages;  
And touching spires atop to flickering flame;

Disclosing herds of sober feeding kine ;  
And brightening on its way the woods to song ;  
As he, that wanderer, brightens when the shaft  
Suddenly falls on him. A moment warmed,  
He scarcely feels its loveliness before  
The light departing leaves his saddened soul  
More cold than ere it came.

Thus love once shone  
And blessed my life : so vanished into gloom.

# I

## MY BEAUTIFUL LADY

I LOVE My Lady ; she is very fair ;  
Her brow is wan, and bound by simple hair :  
Her spirit sits aloof, and high,  
But glances from her tender eye  
In sweetness droopingly.

As a young forest while the wind drives through,  
My life is stirred when she breaks on my view ;  
Her beauty grants my will no choice  
But silent awe, till she rejoice  
My longing with her voice.

Her warbling voice, though ever low and mild,  
Oft makes me feel as strong wine would a child :

And though her hand be airy light  
Of touch, it moves me with its might,  
As would a sudden fright.

A hawk high poised in air, whose nerved wing-tips  
Tremble with might suppressed, before he dips,  
In vigilance, scarce more intense  
Than I; when her voice holds my sense  
Contented in suspense.

Her mention of a thing, august or poor,  
Makes it far nobler than it was before :  
As where the sun strikes life will gush,  
And what is pale receive a flush,  
Rich hues, a richer blush.

My Lady's name, when I hear strangers use,  
Not meaning her, to me sounds lax misuse :  
I love none but My Lady's name ;  
Maud, Grace, Rose, Marian, all the same,  
Are harsh, or blank and tame.

My Lady walks as I have watched a swan

Swim where a glory on the water shone :

There ends of willow branches ride,

Quivering in the flowing tide,

By the deep river's side.

Fresh beauties, howsoe'er she moves, are stirred :

As the sunned bosom of a humming bird

At each pant lifts some fiery hue,

Fierce gold, bewildering green or blue ;

The same, yet ever new.

What time she walks beneath the flowering May,

Quite sure am I the scented blossoms say,

“ O Lady with the sunlit hair !

Stay and drink our odorous air,

The incense that we bear :

“ Thy beauty, Lady, we would ever shade ;

For near to thee, our sweetness might not fade.”

And could the trees be broken-hearted,  
The green sap surely must have smarted,  
When My Lady parted.

How beautiful she is ! A glorious gem  
She shines above the summer diadem  
Of flowers ! And when her light is seen  
Among them, all in reverence lean  
To her, their tending Queen.

A man so poor that want assaults his health,  
Blessed with relief one morn in boundless wealth,  
Breathes no such joy as mine, when she  
Stands statelier, expecting me,  
Than tall white lilies be :

And the white flutter of her robe to trace,  
Where clematis and jasmine interlace,  
Expands my gaze triumphantly:  
Even such his gaze, who sees on high  
His flag, for victory.

We wander forth unconsciously, because  
The azure calmness of the evening draws ;  
When sober hues pervade the ground,  
And universal life is drowned  
Into hushed depths of sound.

We thread a copse where frequent bramble spray  
With loose obtrusiveness from side roots stray,  
And force sweet pauses on our walk ;  
I'll lift one with my foot, and talk  
About its leaves and stalk.

Or maybe that some thorn or prickly stem  
Will take a prisoner her long garments' hem ;  
To disentangle it I kneel,  
Oft wounding more than I can heal ;  
It makes her laugh, my zeal.

Or on before a thin-legged robin hops,  
And leaping on a twig, he pertly stops,

Speaking a few clear notes, till nigh  
We draw, when briskly he will fly  
Into some bush close by.

A flock of goldfinches, arrest their flight,  
And wheeling round a birchen tree alight  
Among its glittering leaves; and stay  
Till scared at our approach, when they  
Strike with vexed trills away.

I recollect My Lady in the wood,  
Keeping her breath, while peering as she stood  
There, balanced lightly on tiptoe,  
To mark a nest built snug below,  
Leaves shadowing her brow.

I recollect her puzzled, asking me,  
What that strange tapping in the wood might be?  
I told of gourmand thrushes, which,  
To feast on morsels oosy rich,  
Cracked poor snails' curling niche.



And then, as knight led captive, in romance,  
Through postern and dark passage, past grim glance  
Of arms ; where from throned state the dame  
He loved, in sumptuous blushes came  
To him held dumb for shame :

Even so my spirit passed, and won, through fears  
That trembled nigh despair ; through foolish tears,  
And hope fallen weak in breathless flight,  
Where beamed in pure entrancing light  
Love's beauty on my sight.

For when we reached a hollow, where the stone  
And scattered fragments of the shells lay strown,  
By margin of a weedy rill ;  
"This air," she said, "feels damp and chill,  
We'll go home if you will."

"Make not my pathway dull so soon," I cried ;  
"See how yon clouds of rosy eventide

Roll out their splendour : while the breeze  
Shifts gold from leaf to leaf, as these  
Thronged saplings move at ease !”

Grateful, in her deep silence, one loud thrush  
Startled the air with song ; then every bush  
Of covert songsters all awoke,  
And all, as to their leader's stroke,  
Into full chorus broke.

A lonely wind sighed up the pines, and sung  
Of woes long past, forgot. My spirit hung  
O'er ~~h~~eful gulfs : and loathly dread  
So bitter was I wished me dead,  
And from a great void said ;

“Wait till its glory fade ; that sun but burned  
To light your loveliness !” The Lady turned  
To me, flushed by its lingering rays,  
Mute as a star. My frantic praise  
Fixed wide her brightened gaze :

When, rapt in resolution, I told all  
The mighty love I bore her ; how would pall  
My very breath of life, if she  
For ever breathed not hers with me :—  
Could I a spirit be,

How, vainly hoping to enrich her grace,  
What gems and wonders would I snatch from space ;  
Would back through the vague distance beat,  
Glowing with joy her smile to meet,  
And heap them round her feet !

Her waist shook to my arm. She bowed her head  
To mine in silence, and my fears had fled :

(Just then we heard a tolling bell.)

Ah no ; it is not right to tell ;

But I remember well

How dear the pressure of her warm young breast  
Against my own, her home ; how proud and blessed

I stood and felt her trickling tears,  
While proudly murmuring in her ears  
The hopes of distant years.

The rest I keep : a holy charm, a source  
Of secret strength and comfort on my course.

Her glory left my pathway bright ;  
And stars on stars throughout the night  
Came blooming into light.

## II

### DAWN

O LILY with the sun of heaven's  
Prime splendour on thy breast !  
My scattered passions toward thee run,  
Poising to awful rest.

The darkness of our universe  
Smothered my soul in night ;  
Thy glory shone ; whereat the curse  
Passed molten into light.

Raised over envy ; freed from pain ;  
Beyond the storms of chance :  
Blessed king of my own world I reign,  
Controlling circumstance.



### III

#### NOON

WARBLE, warble, warble, O thou joyful bird !  
Warble, lost in leaves that shade my happy head ;  
Warble loud delights, laud thy warm-breasted mate,  
And warbling shout the riot of thy heart,  
Thine utmost rapture cannot equal mine.

Flutter, flutter, and flash ; crimson-wingèd flower,  
Parted from thy stem grown in land of dreams !  
Hover and tremble, flitting till thou findest,  
Butterfly, thy treasure ! Yet thou never canst  
Find treasure rich as my contented rest.

Hum on contentedly, thou wandering bee !  
Or pausing in chosen flowers drain their sweets ;  
From honeyed petal thou canst never sip  
The sweetest sweet of sweets, as I from Love,—  
From Love's warm mouth draw sweetest sweet of sweets.

Round, western wind, in grateful eddies sway,  
Whisper deliciously the trembling flowers :  
O could I fill thy vacancy as I  
Am filled with happiness, thou'dst breathe such sounds  
Their blooms should wane and waver sick for love ;  
Thou'dst utter rarer secrets than are blown  
With yonder bean-fields' paradisal scents ;—  
These bean-field odours, lightly sweet and faint,  
That tell of pastures sloping down to streams  
Murmuring for ever on through sunny lands ;  
Where mountains gleam and bank to silvery heights  
That scarce the greatest angel's wing can reach ;  
Where wondrous creatures float beneath the shade  
Of growths sublime, unknown to mortal race ;



Where hazes opaline lie tranced in dreams,  
Where melodies are heard and die at will,  
And little spirits make hot love to flowers.

Though broadly flaming, plain of yellow blossom,  
A dazzling blaze of splendour in the noon!  
And brightening open heaven, ye shining clouds,  
With lustrous light that casts the azure dim!  
Your radiance all united to the sun's  
Were darkness, to that glory born in me.

For Love's own voice has owned her love is mine;  
And Love's own palm has pressed my palm to hers;  
Love's own deep eyes have looked the love she spoke:  
And Love's young heart to mine was fondly beating  
As from her lips I sucked the sweet of life.



## IV

### NIGHT

WHAT trite old folly unharmonious sages  
In dull books write or prattle day by day,  
Of sin original and growing crime !  
And commentating the advance of time,  
Say wrong has fostered wrong for countless ages,  
The strong ones marking down the weak for prey.

They bruit of wars—that thunder heard in dreams ;  
Huge insurrections, and dynastic changes  
Resolved in blood. I marvel they of thought  
By apprehensions are so often wrought  
To state as fact what unto all men seems,  
Who watch cloud-struggles blown through stormy  
ranges !

Why fill they not with love the printed page,  
Illuminating, as yon moon the night,  
Serenely shining on a world of beauty,  
Where love moves ever hand in hand with duty ;  
And life, a long aspiring pilgrimage,  
Makes labour but a pastime of delight !

It was delightfulness to him I found  
Whistling this afternoon behind his team,  
That stepped an easy comfortable pace ;  
While off the mould-iron curved in rolling grace  
Dark earth, wave lapping wave, without a sound ;  
And all passed by me blissful, like a dream.

And those I noticed hoeing on the hill  
Talking familiarly of homely things,  
A daughter's marriage-day, a son's first child ;  
How the good Squire at length was reconciled,  
Had overlooked the pheasant shot by Will :—  
Chirruping on as any cricket sings.

And that complete Arcadian pastoral,  
The piping boy who watched his feeding sheep ;  
And, as a little bird o'erflows with joy,  
Piped on for hours my happy shepherd boy !  
While, coiled below, his faithful animal  
Basked in the sunshine, blinking, half asleep.

This silent night-wind bloweth heavenly pure ;  
Like dimpled warmth of an infantine face.  
Lo, glimmering starlike in yon balmy vale  
The village lights ; each tells a little tale  
Of humble comfort, where its inmates, sure  
In hope, feel grateful in their lowly place.

And here My Lady's lighted oriel shines  
Before me, pretty glowworm, from the gloom.  
Ah, stands she smiling there in loose white gown,  
Hearing the music of her future drown  
The stillness and hushed whispering of the vines,  
Whose lattice-clasping leaves o'ersshade her room !

Or kneels she worshipful beside her bed  
In large-eyed hope and bended lowliness,  
To crave that He, the Giver, may impart  
Enough of strength to bind her trembling heart  
Steadfast and true; and that her will be led  
To own His chastening cares pain but to bless?

Or sits she at her mirror, face to face  
With her own loveliness? (O blessed land  
That owns such twin perfections both together;  
If guessed aright!) Ah, me; I wonder whether  
She now her braided opulent hair unlace  
And drop it billowing from her moonwhite hand!

Then what a fount of wealth to lover's sight!  
Her loosened hair, I heard her mother say,  
When she is seated, tumbles to the floor  
And trails the length of her own foot and more:  
And dare I, lapt in bliss, dream my delight  
Ere long shall watch its rippling softness play?

Dare I, O vanity ! but do I dare  
Think she now looks upon the sorry rhyme  
I wrote long ere that well-loved setting sun,  
What time love conquering dread My Lady won,  
While I unblessed, adored in mute despair :—  
Even now I gave it her at parting time.

“ O let me, Dearest, fall and once impart  
My grieving love to ease this stricken heart ;  
    But once, O Love, to fall and rest  
        This wearied head of mine,  
    But once to weep in thine  
        Unutterably tender breast ;  
And on my drooping lids feel thy young breath ;  
To feel it playing sweeter were than death.

“ Than death were sweet to one bent down and old,  
And worn with persecutions manifold ;  
    Whose stoutness long endured alone  
        The charge of bitter foes,

Till, furious, he rose,

When smitten, all were overthrown.

Who then of those, his dearest, none could find,  
They having fled as leaves before the wind.

“As he would pass, when to his failing sight  
Their forms stand in a vision heavenly bright ;

And piercing through his drowsed ears

Enters their tuneful cry

Of summons, audibly,

Thither, where flow no mourners' tears :

So, dearest Love, my spirit, sore oppressed,  
Would weeping in thy bosom sink to rest.”

Her window now is darkness, save the sheen

Glazed on it by the moon. Within she lies

Her supple shape relaxed, in dreamful rest,

And folds contentment babelike to her breast,

Whose beauteous heaving, even and serene,

Beats mortal time to heavenly lullabies.



## V

### WILD ROSE

To call My Lady where she stood  
"A Wild-rose blossom of the wood,"  
Makes but a poor similitude.

For who by such a sleight would reach  
An aim, consumes the worth in speech,  
And sets a crimson rose to bleach.

My Love, whose store of household sense  
Gives duty golden recompense,  
And arms her goodness with defence :

The sweet reliance of whose gaze  
Originates in gracious ways,  
And wins that trust the trust repays :

Whose stately figure's varying grace  
Is never seen unless her face  
Turn beaming toward another place ;

For such a halo round it glows  
Surprised attention only knows  
A lively wonder in repose.

Can flowers that breathe one little day  
In odorous sweetness life away,  
And wavering to the earth decay,

Have any claim to rank with her,  
Warmed in whose soul impulses stir  
Then bloom to goodness ; and aver

Her worth through spherul joys shall move  
When suns and systems cease above,  
And nothing lives but perfect Love ?

## VI

### MY LADY'S GLORY

STRONG in the regal strength of love,

Her sway is held on earth

Enthroned by native worth :

Whose soul looks downward from above

Exalted stars ; whose power

Brightens the brightest flower.

Her beauty walks in happier grace

Than lightly-moving fawns

O'er old elm-shadowed lawns.

A tenderness shows through her face,

And like the morning's glow,

Hints a full day below.

When looking wide around the skies

On the sun's dazzling track,

And shineth softly back

Its glory to her open eyes,

She fills our hearts and sight

With wonder and delight.

And when tired thought my sense benumbs,

Or when past shadows roll

Their memories on my soul,

Oft breaking through the darkness comes

A solace and surprise,

Her wonder-lighted eyes.

How grand and beautiful the love

She silently conceals,

Nor save in act reveals !

She broods o'er kindness ; as a dove

Sits musing in the nest

Of the life beneath her breast.

The ready freshness that was known  
In man's authentic prime,  
The earliest breath of time,  
Throughout her household ways is shown ;  
Mild greatness subtly wrought  
With quaint and childlike thought.

She sits to music : fingers fall,  
Air shakes ; her lifted voice  
Makes flattered hope rejoice,  
Till some tones shiver through Time's pall,  
Whose wavering rents display  
Dim splendour, far away ;

Where her perfection, glory-crowned,  
Shall rest in love for ever ;  
When mortal systems sever,  
The whole orb'd universe be drowned,  
Leaving the empty skies  
The blank of death-closed eyes.

Deep in this truth I root my trust ;  
And know the dear One's praise,  
Her mutely gracious ways,  
When all her loveliness is dust  
And mosses rase' her name,  
Will bless our world the same.

Since first in trembling vagueness born,  
Her joyous goodness spread  
Like music over head,  
Is now a sacred plain of corn  
Blooming in tender June,  
Lit by a noble moon.

A gap of sunlight in the storm ;  
A blossom ere the spring ;  
Immortal whispering ;  
A spirit manifest through form  
Which we can touch and kiss,—  
To life such beauty is.

Ah ; who can doubt, though he may doubt  
Our solid earth will run  
A future round the sun,  
That gentle impulse given out  
Can never fail or die,  
But throbs eternally !





## VII

### HER SHADOW

At matin time where creepers interlace  
We sauntered slowly, for we loved the place,  
And talked of passing things ; I pleased to trace  
Through leafy mimicry the true leaves made  
The stateliness and beauty of her shade ;

A wavering of strange purples dimly seen,  
It gloomed the daisy's light, the kingcup's sheen,  
And drank up sunshine from the vital green.  
That silent shadow moving on the grass  
Struck me with terror it should ever pass :

Precipitated thought on coming years,  
Where, in the awful shadow of my fears,  
Her shrouded form I saw through blurring tears,

My Darling's shrouded form in beauty's bloom  
Born with funereal sadness to her tomb.

"What idle dreaming," I abruptly cried :  
My Lady turned, half startled, at my side,  
And looked enquiry : I through shame or pride,  
Bantered the words as mockery of sense,  
Mere aimless freak of fostered indolence.

She did not urge me ; gentle, wise, and kind !  
But clasped my hand and talked : her beaming mind  
Arrayed in brightness all it touched. Behind,  
Her shadow fell forgot, as she and I  
Went homeward musing, smiling at the sky.

Thro' pastures and thro' fields where corn grew strong ;  
By cottage nests that could not harbour wrong ;  
Across the bridge where laughed the stream ; along  
The road to where her gabled mansion stood,  
Old, tall, and spacious, in a massy wood.

We loitered toward the porch ; but paused meanwhile  
Where Psyche holds a dial to beguile  
The hours of sunshine by her golden smile ;  
And holds it like a goblet brimmed with wine,  
Nigh clad in trails of tangled eglantine.

In the deep peacefulness which shone around  
My soul was soothed : no darksome vision frowned  
Before my sight while cast upon the ground  
Where Psyche's and My Lady's shadows lay,  
Twin graces on the flower-edged gravel way.

I then but yearned for Titian's glorious power,  
That I by toiling one devoted hour,  
Might check the march of Time, and leave a dower  
Of rich delight, that beauty I could see,  
For broadening generations yet to be.



## VIII

### HER GARDEN

THE wind that's good for neither man nor beast  
Weeks long incessant from the blighting East  
Drove gloom and havoc through the land and ceased.  
When swaying mildly over wide Atlantic seas,  
Bland and dewy soft streamed the Western breeze.

In walking forth, I felt with vague alarm,  
Heavier than wont her pressure on my arm,  
As through morn's fragrant air we sought what harm  
That Eastern wind's despite had done the garden  
growth ;  
Where much lay dead or languished low for drouth.

Her own parterre was bounded by a red  
Old buttressed wall of brick, moss-broidered ;  
Where grew mid pink and azure plots a bed  
Of shining lilies intermixed in wondrous light ;  
She called them "Radiant spirits robed in white."

Here the mad gale had rioted and thrown  
Far drifts of snowy petals, fiercely blown  
The stalks in twisted heaps : one flower alone  
Yet hung and lit the waste, the latest blossom born  
Among its fallen kinsmen left forlorn.

"Thy pallid droop," cried I, "but more than all,  
Thy lonely sweetness takes my soul in thrall,  
O Seraph Lily Blanch ! so stately tall :  
By violets adored, regarded by the rose,  
Well loved by every gentle flower that blows !"

My Lady dovelike to the lily went,  
Took in curved palms a cup, and forward leant,

Deep draining to the gold its dreamy scent.

I see her now, pale beauty, as she bending stands,  
The wind-worn blossom resting in her hands !

Then slowly rising, she in gazing trance  
Affrayed, long pored on vacancy. A glance  
Of chilly splendour tinged her countenance  
And told the saddened truth, that stress of blighting  
weather,  
Had made her lilies and My Lady droop together.





## IX

### TOLLING BELL

"WEAK, but her spirits good," the letter said :

A bell was tolling, while these words I read,

A dull sepulchral summons for the dead.

Fear grew in every pace I strode

Hurrying on that endless road.

When I had reached the house a terror came

That wrought in me a hidden sense of blame,

And entering I scarce dared to speak her name,

Who lay, sweet singer, warbling low

Rhymes I made her long ago.

"The sun exhales the morning dew,

The dew returns again

At eve refreshing rain :

The forest flowers bloom bravely new,  
They drooping fade and die,  
The seeds that in them lie  
Will blossom as the others blew.

“And ever rove among the flowers  
Bright children who ere long  
Are men and women strong :  
When on they pass through sun and showers,  
And glancing sideways watch  
Their children run to catch  
A rainbow with the laughing Hours.”

I watched in awkward wonder for a time  
As there she listless lay and sang my rhyme,  
Wrapped up in fabrics of an Indian clime,  
And looked a Bird of Paradise  
Languid from the traversed skies.

A dawn-bright snowy peak her smile.... Strange I  
Should dawdle near her grace admiringly,  
When love alarmed and challenged sympathy,

Announced in chills of creeping fear  
Danger surely threatening near.

I shrunk from searching the abyss I felt  
Yawned by ; whose verge voluptuous blossoms belt  
With dazzling hues :—she speaks ! I fall and melt,  
One sacred moment drawn to rest,  
Deeply weeping in her breast :

Within the throbbing treasure wept ! But brief  
Those loosening tears of blessed deep relief,  
That won triumphant ransom from my grief,  
While loving words and comfort she  
Breathed in angel tones to me.

Our visions met, when pityingly she flung  
Her passionate arms about me, kissing clung,  
Close kisses, stifling kisses ; till each wrung,  
With welded mouths, the other's bliss  
Out in one long sighing kiss.

Love-flower that burst in kisses and sweet tears,  
Scattering its roseate dreamflakes, disappears  
Into cold truth : for, loud with brazen jeers,  
    That bell's toll, clanging in my brain,  
    Beat me, loth, to earth again :

Where, looking on my Love's endangered state,  
Wrought by keen anguish mad, I struck at fate,  
Prostrating mockingly in sport or hate  
    The aspirations, darkling, we  
    Cherish and resolve to be.

She spoke, but sharply checked ; then as her zone  
A lady's hands would clasp, My Lady's own  
Pressed at her yielding side ; her solemn tone  
    And forward eager face implored  
    Me to kneel where she adored.

Despite her pain, with tender woman's phrase  
She solaced me, whose part it was to raise  
Anew the gladness to her weakened gaze,

And wisely in man's firmness be  
To my drooping vine a tree.

But no ; sunk, dwindled, dwarfed, and mean, beside  
Her couch I sitting saw her eyes grow wide  
With awe, and heard her voice move as the tide  
Of steady music rich and calm  
In some high cathedral psalm :

Then, as that full psalmodic sound o'erflows  
The dusky, vaulted aisles, and slowly grows  
A burst of harmony the hearer knows,  
Her voice assailed my rage, and I  
Took its purport wonderingly.

" Ah, pause for dread, before you charge in haste  
The ways of fate ; for how can those be traced  
That in the life Omnipotent lie based ?  
Or earth-grown atom's bounded soul  
Grasp the universal whole ?

"The more he chafes, the worse his fetter galls  
The luckless captive closed in dungeon walls,  
And, fighting chains and stones, he fighting falls :

Nor will that wasteful immolation

Touch his lofty victor's station.

"Woe be to him perverse who, weak and blind,  
In pride refusing to behold, shall find

The ponderous roll of circumstance will grind

His steps ; and if he turn not, must

Bruise and crush him into dust.

"We are the Lord's, not ours, His angels sing ;  
So you, mine own, bow meekly to your King,  
And striving hard and long His grace will bring :

You'll hear Him through the battle cry,

When the strife is raging high."

She fluttering paused : awhile her surging zeal

All utterance overwhelmed to mute appeal :

I felt as men who fallen in battle feel,

When far their chief's sword, like a gem,  
Points to glory not for them.

“When naked heaven is azure to your eyes,  
And light shines everywhere, you can be wise ;  
But, when its storms in common course arise,  
To you the wind but sobs and grieves  
Wailing with the streaming leaves.

“Rust eats the steel, and moths corrupt the cloth,  
And peevish doubts destroy the soul that's loth  
To strive for duty, merged in shameful sloth,  
And lolls a weary wretch forlorn,  
While men reap the mellow corn.

“It is not man's to dream in sweet repose ;  
He toils and murmurs, as he wondering goes,  
Poor changeful glitter on the stream that flows  
In lapses huge and solemn roar,  
Ever on without a shore.

"The plantlet grown in darkness puts forth spray ;  
Through loaded gloom yearns feebly toward some ray  
Of bounty golden from the outer day  
That shines eternally sublime  
On the dancing motes of time."

The music stopped, and passed into a smile  
Of tenderness, which she impressed to guile  
Her pain from me : I gazed as one awhile  
Escaped, who sees twin rainbows shine  
O'er his wrecked ship gulfed in brine.

My lost soul sank adown in soundless seas  
To ruined heaps besprent with ancient lees  
Of wealth : by soft stupendous ocean-trees ;  
By anchors forged in early time ;  
Changed to trails of rusted slime :

To where, what seemed a tomb, in this deep hell  
Of night, that bore a name I dread to tell :  
And while I read struck some gigantic bell,



Whose thunder laughing through my brain  
Mocked me back to flesh again.

Here all was emptier than the empty shade  
Of mist before a midnight moon decayed :  
Here life was strange as death, and more dismayed  
My spirit, now scarce conscious she  
Urged entreaty yet to me.

“’Tis life in life to know the King is just,  
And will not animate his helpless dust  
With fire unquenchable whose ardour must  
Achieve majestic deeds that raise  
Universal shouts of praise :

“Shouts of acclaim that gather into story,  
Chanted by one on some high promontory  
Who glowing in the dawn’s advancing glory,  
Far down upon the listening crowd  
Shines through swathes of lingering cloud.

“And fires, by what he sings, to noble feud  
With grosser instincts, the charged multitude,  
That grow in temper and similitude  
To those great souls whose victories  
Triumph still in melodies.

“This fire will not be granted to distress,  
To fail in cold dead ash and bitterness :  
He will not grant true love that yearns to bless  
The world, that it may only sigh  
Back into itself and die.”

The words here faltering sank to undertone :  
Her soul was murmuring to itself alone  
On some wide desolation, dark, unknown ;  
Whose limits, stretched from mortal sight,  
Touch the happy hills of light.

“I, toiling at the task assigned to me,  
Am summoned from my labour suddenly :  
The King recalls his handmaiden ; and she

Submissively herself anoints,  
Going whither He appoints.

“The sheaves are garnered now, her work is done,  
The day is waning, and she must be gone,  
To bend herself before the Holy One,  
And strictly her appointed meed  
There accept in very deed.”

Dead silence, more than if a thunder-stroke  
Had crashed the summer air, my sense awoke  
To sudden apprehension : hard the yoke  
Of misery was mine to bear ;  
Wrath-befooled, in my despair

I went, and, leaning from the lattice, mused  
On my immeasurable woe ; accused  
Heaven's King, that, like an earthly one, abused  
His power omnipotent, and hurled  
Curses broadcast on the world.

Then glancing toward her danger thought, "A cell  
Of noxious vapours this dull life ; as well  
She should escape : so pure ! she scarce could dwell  
With sinful creatures who alway  
Stumbling take the stain of clay.

"But I unworthy ! How in conscience I—  
How could I hazard guidance in her high  
Cold path of duty leading to the sky !  
As well hold torch to light a star  
Shining, mystic, nebular.

"She yearns to bless the world : just love for all  
Best shows in love for one ; love cannot fall  
Like sunshine over half this wondrous ball,  
But her impulses yearn to bless  
All the world. Strange tenderness !"

This shameful mockery of myself alone  
Was interrupted by a sobbing moan  
That brought me to her couch, where low mine own

Sweet Love lay swooning ashy white,  
Eyelids closing from the light.

Ah, coarse, hard, bitter, brutal self! A beast  
In passion, nay far worse than such, to feast  
On baseless anger against her whose least  
Stray word was kind, her daily food  
Interest in another's good.

My passion then, like an unruly horse  
Checked by a master's hand, fell slack; its force  
Unnerved, and stifling me with hot remorse;  
Frightened, despairing, "Love," I cried,  
Wildly busy at her side;

And kissed and chafed her brow; I chafed her hand;  
Audacious grown with fear, released the band  
That clasped her tender waist, and keenly scanned  
Each feature, till her opening eyes  
Met my own in bright surprise:

“ Ah you ! I had from you passed and the world ;  
Through endless nothing rudely was I hurled  
While you did hang above, your proud lip curled,  
Regarding me with piercing hate  
Crying I deserved my fate.”

We met each other, as when waters meet  
In long continued shock, and muttering, sweet  
Confusion mixed in unity complete  
That changing time may not dis sever ;  
One in love and one for ever.

Purged by remorse, love knit my strength ; and now  
Came gracious power to still upon her brow  
Those troubled waves of some dark underflow ;  
Her soul victorious over pain  
Spoke in golden smiles again.

We sat and read how Prospero closed his strife  
With evil, wrought his charm, and crowned his life  
In making two fair beings man and wife :

Of brave Count Gismond's happy lot ;  
Then the Lady of Shalott.

We ceased ; for eve had come by dusky stealth.  
I saw, while lifting her, like crimson health  
Burn in her cheeks, holding the weighted wealth  
Of all the worlds in heaven to me ;  
Held her long, long, lingeringly :

And laying down more than my life, her weight ;  
Scarce kissed her pallid hands, then moved with great  
Reluctance, bodeful, from her placid state ;  
But, ere my slow feet reached the door,  
Turned and caught one last look more,

And awe-struck stood to see portentous loom  
From her large eyes full gazing through the gloom  
Love darkly wedded to eternal doom,  
As she were gazing from the dead :  
Falling at her feet I said,

“Bless me, dear Love, bless me before I go ;  
With love divine a beam of comfort throw,  
For guidance and support, that I through woe  
Be raised and purified in grace  
Worthy to behold your face.”

She bowed her head in stately tenderness  
Low whispering as her hands my brow did press,  
“I pray that He will your lone spirit bless,  
And if to leave you be my fate,  
Pray you for me while I wait.”

A useless pang in her no more to wake,  
I forced myself away, nor dared to take  
Another look for her belovèd sake ;  
My face had told of the distressed  
Swollen heart labouring in my breast.

When in the outer air, I felt as one  
Fresh startled from a dream, wherein the sun  
Had dying left the earth a dingy, dun



Annihilation. The nightjar

Only thrilled the air afar :

No other sound was there : a muffled breeze  
Crept in the shrubs, and shuddered up the trees,  
Then sought the ghost-white vapour of the leas,  
Where one long sheet of dismal cloud  
Swathed the distance in a shroud.

A solitary eye of cold stern light  
Stared threateningly beyond the Western height,  
Wrapped in the closing shadows of the night ;  
And all the peaceful earth had slept  
But that eye stern vigil kept.

I wandered wearily I knew not where ;  
Up windy downs far-stretching, bleak and bare ;  
Through swamps that soddened under stagnant air ;  
In blackest woods and brambled mesh,  
Thorny bushes tore my flesh :

Amid the ripening corn and heard it sigh,  
Hollow and sad, as night crawled sluggishly :  
Hollow and sadly sighed the corn while I  
    Moved darkly in the midst, a blight  
    Darkening more the hateful night.

My soul its hoarded secrets emptied on  
The vaulted gloom of night : old fancies shone,  
And consecrated ancient hopes long gone ;  
    Old hopes that long had ceased to burn,  
    Gone, and never to return.

No starlight pierced the dense vault over head,  
And all I loved was passing or had fled :  
So on I wandered where the pathway led ;  
    And wandered till my own abode  
    Spectral pale rose from the road.

What time I gained my home I saw the morn  
Made dimly on the sullen East. Wayworn  
I went into the echoing house forlorn,

Heartsick and weary sought my room,  
Better had, it been the tomb.

I lay, and ever as my lids would close  
In dull forgetfulness to slumberous doze,  
Lone sounds of phantom tolling scared repose ;  
Till wearied nature, sore oppressed,  
Slowly sank and dropped to rest.



## X

### WILL-O'-THE-WISP

“GONE the sickness, fled the pain,  
Health comes bounding back again,  
And all my pulses tingle for delight.  
Together what a pleasant thing  
To ramble while the blackbirds sing,  
And pasture lands are sparkling dewy bright !

“Soon will come the clear spring weather,  
Hand in hand we'll roam together,  
And hand in hand will talk of springs to come ;  
As on that happy day you played  
The necromancer with my shade,  
In senseless shadow gazing darkly dumb.

“Cast away that cloudy care,  
Or, I vow, in my parterre  
You shall not enter when the lilies blow,  
And I go there to stand and sing  
Songs to the heaven-white wondrous ring;  
Sir Would-be Wizard of the crumpled brow!”

## XI

### GIVEN OVER

THE men of learning say she must  
Soon pass and be as if she had not been.  
To gratify the barren lust  
Of Death, the roses in her cheeks are seen  
To blush so brightly, blooming deeper damascene.

All hope and doubt, all fears are vain :  
The dreams I nursed of honouring her are past,  
And will not comfort me again.  
I see a lurid sunlight throw its last  
Wild gleam athwart the land whose shadows lengthen  
fast.

It does not seem so dreadful now  
The horror stands out naked, stark, and still :  
I am quite calm, and wonder how  
My terror played such mad pranks with my will.  
The North winds fiercely blow, I do not feel them  
chill.

All things must die : somewhere I read  
What wise and solemn men pronounce of joy ;  
No sooner born, they say, than dead :  
The strife of being, but a whirling toy  
Humming a weary moan spun by capricious boy.

Has my soul reached a starry height  
Majestically calm ? No monster, drear  
And shapeless, glares me faint at night ;  
I am not in the sunshine checked for fear  
That monstrous shapeless thing is somewhere crouch-  
ing near ?



No ; woe is me ! far otherwise :  
The naked horror numbs me to the bone ;  
In stupor calm its cold blank eyes  
Set hard at mine. I do not fall or groan,  
Our island Gorgon's face has changed me into stone.



## XII

### STORM

Now thickening round the shrunken baseless sky,  
Sullen vapours crawl  
Climbing to masses, tumbled heavily  
Grim in giant sprawl,  
That smother up domed heaven's scud-fleckered height  
And form like mortal armies ranged for fight.

This lighted gloom spreads ghastly on the land ;  
Sheep do crowd ; and herds  
Collecting, bellow pitifully bland.  
Quiet are the birds

In ghostly trees that shiver not a sound :  
And leaves decayed drop straight unto the ground.

Drearily solemn runs a monotone,

Heard through breathless hush,

Swollen torrents hissing far in lavish moan,

Foamed with headlong rush,

Sob on protesting, toward annihilation,

Their solitary dismal lamentation.

This gloom has sucked all interest from the scene,

Now changed wrathful gray :

Familiar things, that staring plain had been,

Fade in mists away :

At ambush, watching from its stormy lair,

Some danger hovering loads the stagnant air.

It serves to little purpose I may know

That electric law

Whereby the jagged glare and thunder-blow

Latent impulse draw ;

No less my danger. Ha ! that lightning flash

Proclaims in fire the coming thunder-crash.

But what care I though deluges do pour

Beating earth to mire,

Though heaven shattering with the thunder's roar

Scorcheth now in fire,

Though every planet molten from its place

Should trickle lost through everlasting space ;

For this blank prospect, void of all but dread,

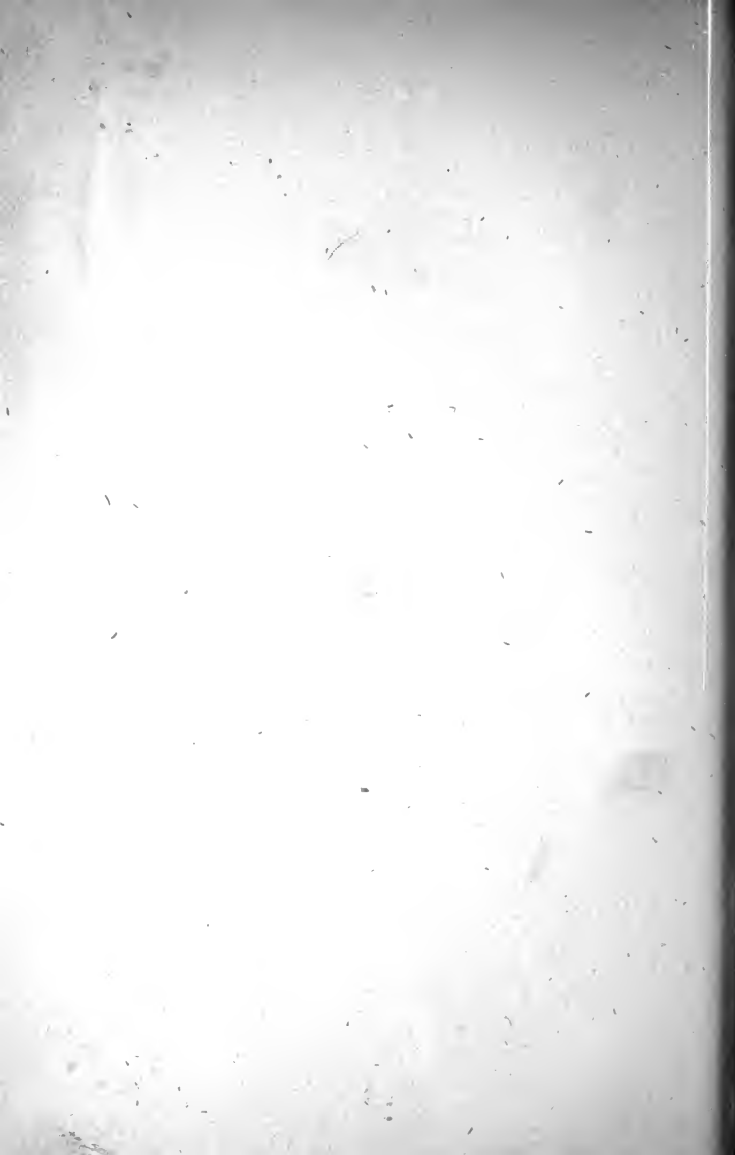
Void as any tomb,

My soul has left ; and by a lonely bed,

In a girl's sick room,

Hangs there expectant of her parting breath,

The silent voice of doom, the stroke of death.



**PART THE SECOND**





# I

## MY LADY IN DEATH

ALL is but coloured show. I look  
Up through the green hues shed  
By leaves above my head,  
And feel its inmost worth forsook  
My being, when she died.  
This heart, now hot and dried,  
Halts, as the parched course where a brook  
Mid flowers was wont to flow,  
Because her life is now  
No more than stories in a printed book.

Grass thickens proudly o'er that breast,

Clay-cold and sadly still,

My happy face felt thrill.

How much her dear, dear mouth expressed !

And now are closed and set

Lips which my own have met !

Her eyelids by the damp earth pressed !

Damp earth weighs on her eyes ;

Damp earth shuts out the skies.

My Lady rests her heavy, heavy rest.

To see her high perfection sweep

The favoured earth, as she

With welcoming palms met me !

How can I but recall and weep ?

Her hands' light charm was such,

Care vanished at their touch.

Her feet spared little things that creep ;

"For stars are not," she'd say,

"More wonderful than they."

And now she sleeps her heavy, heavy sleep.

Immortal hope shone on that brow,  
Above whose waning forms  
Go softly real worms.

It surely was a cruel blow  
Which cut my Darling's life  
Sharply, as with a knife ;  
I hate my own that lets me grow  
As grows a bitter root  
From which rank poisons shoot,  
Upon the grave where she is lying low.

Almighty King ! Could it be just,  
To let her young life play  
Its easy, natural way ;  
Then, with an unexpected thrust,  
Strike out the life you lent,  
Even as her feelings blent  
With those around whose love would trust  
Her willing power to bless,  
For all their happiness ?  
Alone she moulders into common dust.

Birds twittering peck the variant weeds  
That wave above this bed  
Where my dear Love lies dead :  
Their fluttering bursts the globèd seeds,  
And beats the downy pride  
Of dandelions, wide :  
From speargrass, bowed with watery beads,  
The wet uniting, drips  
In sparkles off the tips :  
In mallow bloom the wild bee drops and feeds.

No more she hears, where vines adorn  
Her window, on the boughs  
Birds chirrup an arouse :  
Flies, buzzing, strengthening with the morn,  
She will not hear again  
At random strike the pane :  
No more on grassplat newly shorn  
With her gown's glancing hem  
Bend down the daisy's stem,  
In walking forth to view what flowers are born.

Nor ponder more those dark green rings  
    Stained quaintly on the lea,  
    To picture elfin glee ;  
While through the grass a faint air sings,  
    And swarms of insects revel  
    Along the sultry level :  
No more will watch their brilliant wings,  
    Now lightly dip, now soar,  
    Then sink, and rise once more.  
My Lady's death makes dear these trivial things.

One noon, within an oak's broad shade,  
    Lost in delightful talk,  
    We rested from our walk.  
Beyond the shadow cows were laid,  
    Chewing with drowsy eye  
    Their cud complacently :  
Elegant deer walked o'er the glade,  
    Or stood with wide bright eyes  
    Gazing a short surprise ;  
And up the fern slope nimble conies played.

Rooks cawed and laboured through the heat ;

Each wing-flap seemed to make

Their weary bodies ache ;

The swallows, though so wildly fleet,

Made breathless pauses there

At something in the air.

All disappeared : our pulses beat

Distincter throbs, and each

Turned and kissed without speech,

She trembling from her mouth down to her feet.

I felt her youthful bosom heave,

And listened to the din

Of joyous life within.

My forehead felt her lightly breathe,

As with her breath it rose ;

And in our blest repose

Her two arms clasped my neck : while eve

In shadowy silence came

And quenched the Western flame,

That lingered round her as if loth to leave.

Then told I in a whispered tone  
Of that approaching time,  
When merry peal and chime  
Of marriage ringing should make known,  
In crashes through the air  
Exultingly we were  
By solemn rite each other's own :  
And she, confiding, meek,  
Against mine pressed her cheek,  
And gave response in happy tears alone.

No heed of time took we, because  
Those clanging bells had quite  
Absorbed us in delight.

A happiness so perfect awes  
The failing pulse and breath,  
Like the mute doom of death :

As then, an instantaneous pause  
Flashed on my vacant eye  
A swift Eternity :

When starting, as if clutched by demon-claws,

Awakened from a dizzy swoon ;  
I felt appalling fears  
With ringings in my ears,  
And wondered why the glaring moon  
Swung round the dome of night  
With such tremendous might.  
Next came, like the sweet air of June,  
A treacherous calm suspense  
That bred a loathly sense,  
Some nameless ill would overwhelm me soon.

She passed like summer flowers away.  
Her aspect and her voice  
Will never more rejoice,  
For both lie hushed in cold decay.  
Broken the golden bowl  
Which held her hallowed soul :  
It was an idle boast to say  
"Our souls are as the same,"  
And stings me now to shame :  
Her spirit went, and mine did not obey.



The black truth, with a fiery dart,  
Went hurtling through my thought,  
When I beheld her brought  
Whence she with life did not depart.  
Her beauty by degrees  
Sank, sharpened from disease :  
The heavy sinking at her heart  
Sucked hollows in her cheek,  
And made her eyelids weak,  
Though oft they opened wide with sudden start.

The Deathly Power in silence drew  
My Lady's life away.  
I watched, dumb for dismay,  
The shock of thrills that quivered through  
Her wasted frame, and shook  
The meaning in her look,  
As near, more near, the moment grew.  
O horrible suspense !  
O giddy impotence !  
I saw her features lax, and change their hue.

Her gaze, grown large with fate, was cast

Where my mute agonies

Made sadder her sad eyes :

Her breath caught with short plucks and fast,

Then one hot choking strain ;

She never breathed again.

I had the look which was her last :

Her love, when breath was gone,

One moment lingering shone,

Then slowly closed, and hope for ever passed.

A dreadful tremour ran through space

When first the mournful toll

Rang for My Lady's soul.

The shining world was hell ; her grace

Only the flattering gleam

And mockery of a dream :

Oblivion struck me like a mace,

And as a tree that's hewn

I dropped, in a dead swoon,

And lay a long time cold upon my face.

Earth had one quarter turned before

My miserable fate

Pressed down with its whole weight.

My sense came back ; and shivering o'er

I felt a pain to bear

The sun's keen cruel glare,

Which shone not warm as heretofore ,

And never more its rays

Will satisfy my gaze :

No more ; no more ; oh, never any more.



## II

### DAY DREAM

WHAT art thou whispering lowly to thy babe,  
O wan girl-mother, with Madonna lids  
Downcast? Why pressest thou so close his pale  
Geranium cheek to thy yet whiter breast?  
Ah, doubtless sweet; to feel him draw the stream  
That fills with strength his lily limbs! And laughs  
Thine own heart with his deeply dimpled laughter,  
Answering straight thy dainty finger's touch?  
And understandeth he that murmurous moan,  
Wherewith thou hushest, patting him to rest?

What visions charm thy gaze, now resting wide  
In settled sweet content? Beholdest thou  
Thy babe, now sprung a man, walk sunhazed slopes

With one lovelier than visions ; lovely as  
The truth, O Love, when thou dost smile on me ?  
Or seest thou him still greater grown in might,  
And stout of action, forcing on to reach  
That changeful coloured flag, whose waving crests  
The glittering heights of fame, for which men pant ;  
Unmindful there what tempests rage and sweep ?  
Alas ; what dream has made that watery veil  
Hide thine eye's light from mine ; even as a mist  
Passing between me and a harvest moon !  
And whence this shadowy wall that baulks my gaze ?  
Why fadest thou, thyself, in mist, O Love ?  
Whither hath fled thy babe—and where art thou ?—  
Where am I ?—Is it life—a dream—or death ?

Ah me ; alas, this crushing wretchedness !  
And I a vainer fool than one who yearns  
Clutching at rainbows spanned across the sky !  
Ah, hope diseased ! My spirit lured astray  
By siren hopes drifts hard by some dark fate :

And hope alternating despair has mixed  
My life so long with charnelled death, that I  
Can scarce resolve the present from my past,  
Nor what might once have been from what is now.

Ah, Dearest ! shall I never see thy face  
Again : not ever ; never any more ?  
I know that fancy was but naught, and one  
Born of past hope : I know thy earthly form  
Is mouldering in its tomb : but yet, O Love,  
Thy spirit must dwell somewhere in this waste  
Of worlds, that fill the overwhelming heavens  
With light and motion ; that could never die !  
And wilt thou not vouchsafe one beaming look  
To ease a lonely heart that beats in pain  
For loss of thee, and only thee, O Love ?  
Or hast thou found in that pure life thou livest  
My soul was an unworthy choice for thine,  
And therefore takest no count of its despair ?  
And yet, yea verily, thy love was true ;

I would not wrong thee with another thought :  
I would not enter at the gates of heaven  
By thinking else than that thy love was true.  
But I obtain no response to my cries,  
Making within my soul all void, and cold,  
And comfortless.

Ay, empty, as this grate,  
Of life, wherefrom the fire has well nigh fled,  
And leaves but a chasmed ugliness and ruin :  
And weak as faltering of these taper flames  
Half sunken in their sockets, by whose gleam  
I see, though faintly, where my books stand ranged  
Most mute ; though sometime eloquent to me ;  
And where my pictures hang with other forms  
Instinct from what I know : and friends portrayed  
Like ghosts loom on me from another world.  
Then what remains, but, like a child worn out  
With weeping, that I sink me down to rest,  
And sleep, not dream—and if I could would die ?



### III

#### MY LADY'S VOICE FROM HEAVEN

I HAD been sitting by her tomb

In torpor 'one dark night ;

When fitful tremours shook the doom

Of cold lethargic settled gloom,

That weighed upon my sight :

And while I sat, and sickly heaves

Disturbed my spirit's sloth,

A wind came, blown o'er distant sheaves,

That hissing, tore and lashed the leaves

And lashed the undergrowth :

It roared and howled, it raged about

With some determined aim ;

And storming up the night, brought out

The moon, that like a happy shout,

Called forth My Lady's name

In sudden splendour on the stone.

Then, for an instant, I

Snatched and heaped up my past, bestrown

With hopes and kisses, struggling moan,

And pangs : as suddenly,

Oppressed with overwhelming weight,

Down fell the edifice ;

When touched, as by the hand of Fate,

My gloom was gone. I felt my state

So light, I sobbed for bliss.

The loud winds, spent in seeking rest,

Dropped-dead. My fevered brow

Drank coolness from the grass it pressed ;  
And in my desolated breast

A change began to grow,

While those blessed tears did slowly drain

The load of grief which had

A sluggish curse within me lain,

Save when remembrance wrought my brain

For vivid moments' mad.

My tears, as treasures of a wreck

That in the ocean slept

Recovered, flowed without a check ;

And Earth was my good mother's neck

To which I clung and wept.

I rose at length, and felt a dense

Benumbed dead weight. And now

The night air hung in deep suspense ;

A singing hush that pressed my sense

And stunned me like a blow :

Through my lids clenched, the living air  
In gold and purple rings  
Danced musically round me there,  
The light it held throbbed with the glare  
And beat of rapid wings.

Mine eyes I dared not try to raise ;  
My Lady's beamed on me  
In fixed serenity of gaze,  
And were what old sunshiny days  
In childhood used to be.

A gasping lapse ; and I was whirled  
Round the faint void of space ;  
In dizzy circles hugely hurled,  
I saw the constellated world  
With every orb embrace

To one stupendous vortex-light,  
Spinning a fiery rain,

Then fail, struck out by sudden night :  
When swung adown in headlong might,  
Earth's touch shook through my brain.

The dumb sound in mine ears was burst  
By Her portentous voice ;  
As sweet as death to one accurst,  
As unto one near blind for thirst  
A running water's noise.

Her voice in some translucent star,  
Remote, beyond my sight,  
Was singing marvellously far ;  
And yet so strangely near to jar  
As jars too strong a light.

She sang a song. She warbled low,  
She did not sing in words ;  
I felt it in my spirit glow,  
And knew it, as with joy I know  
The morning shouts of birds.

But hard the task I undertake,  
With mortal tongue to reach  
The utterance of My Love, and make  
Her high immortal meaning break  
To clearness through my speech !

I can no more, with glimmering trope  
That into darkness runs,  
Reveal its depth, than they could hope,  
Who on in lifelong blindness grope,  
To sing of rising suns.

“ Or e’er that life my King had lent  
Was lifted into rest,  
His message through my lips He sent,  
And on thy path His glory went  
To guide thee to the blessed.

“ But thou didst turn thy face, and scorn  
His grace divine as nought ;

And set thy gaze to earth forlorn,  
And rage at fate, till gaunt and worn,  
Death mouldered in thy thought.

“Thou, blindly gross, didst toy with clay,  
And in the ghastly gleam  
Of charnel gloom didst kiss decay;  
And many full moons waned away,  
And left thee in thy dream.

“For with thy Lily's worldly dress  
Thou didst thine eyesight fill;  
And scorn to know its loveliness  
Were but an empty boast unless  
Made living by His will.

“Thou mourn'dst not most the vanished soul  
Which was my Lord's through thine;  
But more the broken pleasure-bowl,  
Whose golden richness shed, when whole,  
Deep splendour in thy wine.

“And therefore living wert thou made  
To taste the cup of death ;  
And therefore did the glory fade,  
From guidance into deadly shade  
That iced thy shuddering breath.

“Permitted, now I come to thee :  
I warn thee of thy sin ;  
I urge thee cleanse thine eyesight free,  
And purified again thou’lt see  
The way His love to win.

“His love incomprehensible  
Did never turn away  
From penitent whom harm befell ;  
But springeth like a desert well  
For thirsting poor estray.

‘Let him who scorneth mercy shown,  
Unhappy one, beware !



For whoso lives in pride alone,  
His pride shall harden to a stone  
Too great for him to bear.

“And whoso, having warnèd been,  
Refuseth still to turn,  
Behind his shadow, shrunken mean,  
A poring spectre shall be seen  
With livid stare and girn.

“Thou troubled one, who unto me  
Art next my Lord's own grace,  
O turn to Him, and He will be  
A refuge from thy misery,  
A smile upon thy face!

“A righteous strength will nerve thine arm,  
And courage fill thy breast:  
And having bravely warred on harm,  
The cries of victory shall charm  
Thy dying eyes to rest.

"And succoured ones shall praise his name

Who, toiling for them, died.

And, nobly sung, his honest fame

Shall beat in hearts unborn, and claim

Their love and grateful pride.

"And Love will lead her sacrifice

To where a shining row

Stand beckoning to the heights of bliss ;

And she will clasp his hands and kiss

Welcome upon his brow."

I knew not when the singing ceased

To trance my brightened soul,

Then from that long eclipse released.

But looking hopeful toward the East,

I saw flush pole to pole

The dawn, that had begun to show,

And through dank vapour burned,

As in a sick face lying low

The rich incarnadine would glow,  
When healthy life returned.


Small drowsy chirpings met the light,  
And dim in lowlands far  
Lone marsh-birds winged their misty flight ;  
What time Her aspect on my sight  
Beamed from the morning star.

It waned into the warbling day ;  
That, rising fierce and strong,  
Now looked the Western gloom away,  
And kindled such a roundelay,  
The world awoke with song.

And fresh delicious breezes came  
With scents of paradise  
So tingling through my knitted frame,  
That never since I lisped a name  
Knew I such joy arise.

Pure was the azure over head ;  
Bright was the earth around ;  
While I on resolutions fed,  
And moved, as one called from the dead,  
In silence on the ground.

Toward my home I walked, elate  
With hope and settled plan :  
And reverent to the will of Fate,  
In every step I trod my weight,  
A sober-minded man.



**PART THE THIRD**



# I

## YEARS AFTER

OUR world has spun ten circles round the light  
Since here she vanished. In my helpless gaze,  
To mark the spot, was fixed this carven stone,  
Raw, garish, stolidly obtrusive then,  
Now harmonizing kindly with the rest.  
A spray of centipedal ivy creeps  
From death to birth, and clings fast to her name;  
With kisslike touch its tender leaflets feel  
The letters' edge,—I scarce can think it chance.

Now scene by scene that strange old long-ago,  
Crowding my opened memory, presents  
Tumultuous, as in dreams, some dreadful state  
Wherein I knew not falsehood from the truth;

Where hope ascending struck the star of Love,  
Then fell down headlong grovelling in despair;  
But rose at length and walked the beaten way.  
So dim and far these things; so worn and changed,  
I cannot feel myself as him who sought  
And won her love. And is it true indeed,  
That I absorbed in tenderest intercourse  
Of trustful glance, and trustful clasping hands,  
With her went wandering by the river side;  
While over head melodious branches sang,  
Scattering the gold of sunset-dazzled flowers  
Breathing their perfumed sweetness from our path,  
That flickering reached, where set in purple woods,  
The rugged church tower burned a wall of fire!

Did I, when silence awed the winter woods,  
And giant shadows trenched the frosty ground  
From bole and limb whose vault held in the night,  
Love to behold the full-grown magic moon  
Bring splendours glittering on the silver rime?



Yes ; mid the notes and emerald flush of spring,  
With swollen brooks exulting through the fields,  
And rainy winds that in an ocean-roar  
Bore down the forest tops the livelong day,  
Through straggling gleams, through random wafts of  
shade,  
Rejoicingly I trod the glistening paths.

Yes, I it was, in dreamy golden haze,  
Beheld poor men hard toiling all the hours,  
And thought them happier than the birds that sung,  
That sung and trilled in gurgles of delight.

Dallying I loitered in the golden time  
Long after the loved nightingale had ceased  
To pour his passionate impulse over plains  
Of shivering corn, now ripened into wealth ;  
When sunset-coloured fruit in orchard crofts  
Hung slowly mellowing under azure noons ;  
And, hushed in darkened leaves, the dreaming air

Swelled gently to a whispering sound, and died.  
With joy I wandered on from knoll to knoll,  
And lost in marvel, drank the lispings winds,  
The fairy winds that lisped me all was good.  
Nor marked I when the clogged horizon flew  
In dusky vapour crowding up the skies ;  
But woke anon when deathlike pallor thrown  
From wrathful drifts laid the whole land in gloom ;  
When war, enormous war, broke through the heavens,  
In sheets and streaking fire and thunderous clap,  
With shock on shock, that crushed the ripened corn,  
And swept the piled up midsummer to ruin,  
That wrenched great timbers of a thousand years,  
Shaking the strong foundations of the land.  
And when at last the terrible tempest fell,  
Wide heaven was emptied of the sun and stars,  
Or void of more than all their light to me.

Life fretted me to hollow weariness  
When my sweet Dove of Paradise went off,

Ascending, glory-guarded, into heaven.  
Then feeding on the past, and fondling death,  
I grew in livid horror : soon had grown,  
By foul self cankered, to a charnel ghoul,  
Had not Almighty God, gracious in love,  
Permitted her own presence once again,  
Mysterious, as a vision, yet once more  
Appear, a shining warning, to reveal  
Athwart my path unfathomable gulfs,  
And kindle hope wherewith I still might gain  
The hills that shine for ever to the blessed.

Much striving has been mine since these events  
Ruled the pulsations of my daily life :  
And now they are a vulgar chronicle,  
And gossiped over by the rudest tongues.  
A haunting song of old felicities  
Lured me, scarce consciously, down here to muse  
Upon my shattered dreams ; safe from the roar  
Of interests in our vast metropolis,

The beating heart of England and the world.  
Not seen by me, since on that wondrous night  
Her consolation came into my soul ;  
Yet here again I stand beside her tomb—  
And here I muse, more wise and not so sad.

Hers was a gracious and a gentle house !  
Rich in obliging nice observances  
And famed ancestral hospitality.  
A cool repose lay grateful through the place ;  
And pleasant duties (promptly, truly, done,  
And every service moved by hidden springs,  
Sped with intelligence,) went smoothly round.

The steward to that stately country home  
Looked native there as lichen to the oak.  
He first held station, chief in care and trust,  
That day which gave his baby mistress birth ;  
And her he loved as father loves his own,  
Bearing her too that reverence which we feel

Toward those who, born to loftier state than ours,  
Sit their high fortune with becoming grace.

His love she ever sumptuously returned

In bounteous thankfulness for service done :

How brightly twinkled then his shrewd gray eyes,  
And shone the roundness where his honest cheeks  
Played to the rippling gladness of his mouth !

In childhood rambles, it was mostly he

She chose her partner, spite of blandishment ;

And to her winsome ways he would forego

His pompous surveillance of wine and plate,

To guard her, liting, where the summer lay

On honeyed murmuring limes, and under elms,

August with knotted centuries of strength

And rooks sonorous in their shadowy heights.

By thymy slopes, foot-deep in sward they roved,

Both lightly garrulous, and she, sweet child,

Fusing her whole attention into joy,

Until they stood before the lake, that gleamed

With water-lilies, sun, and moving cloud.

Then straight the flanking sedge, and reeds remote,  
Gave clattering ducks and wild outlandish fowl,  
That tore in stormy scampering and splash  
To snap with clamour at the crumbled bread,  
He had provided slyly, bent on fun :  
The swans meanwhile, majestic, puffed, and slow,  
Came proudly into action ; but alas,  
To small result ; for by mischance the spoil  
Through dexterous skirmish fell to meaner bills.  
“ Our bread is all cast on the waters now,  
“ And well I'd like to know how many days  
“ It must bide there before 'tis found again ! ”—  
Some fool's dull joke repeated : good man, he,  
Unversed in deep text comment, never dreamed  
What time its Abyssinian mountain roots  
Swollen by fresh torrents mix in Nubian lands,  
And thunder down from rocky ledge to ledge ;  
How Sacred Nilus flooding bank and plain  
Transformed old Egypt to a shining sea :  
When slaves in swarthy crowds, despised as dirt,

Paddled upon the waters scattering corn,  
While swam to their sad eyes a raking glance  
Of temple-sphinxes, palms, and pyramids,  
Faint sacrificial fires with dismal cries ;  
And small hard masters, armed with blooded thongs,  
Jocose and fierce, scourged out their utmost toil.  
Long ages ere man heard this promised hope,  
THE FIRST SHALL BE THE LAST, THE LAST THE FIRST.  
But the dear child his vacant prattle heard  
In wonder, and believed it lore profound :  
And ever after, when in solemn church,  
(The very church I have before me now !)  
Or household prayer, these words were touched upon,  
Pert visions would intrude of gabbling fowls  
Mid splashing waters, sedge, and lily stars.

In wending home, he filled her lap with flowers ;  
And she, ere yet the house was reached, unloosed  
His guarding hand, ran forward, glinted through  
The porch, and with a joyous outcry lit

The room, where sat in converse or at books  
Her parents : then, as she an hour before  
Had seen those mirrored marvels of the lake  
All trembling, merge to one confused turmoil  
Of beauty broken into shattered lights,  
When o'er its surface swept the hungry fowls,  
So blurred with shifting catches, so involved  
Through eagerness, her babbled narrative  
To the kind mother, who, embracing her,  
Felt satisfied her child had been well pleased.  
Then the great father, he would lightly lift  
To knee his darling girl ; with fingers cup  
The tiny chin, and kiss the rosebud mouth ;  
And gently his large tawny hand would stroke  
That woven sunshine glowing down her back,  
Which changed to deepest auburn glossed with gold,  
Calling her tricky names. But, when at length  
Appeared the calm inevitable nurse,  
He laughed ; and she in screaming laughter flew  
By stalwart arm thrust high above his head



Immeshed in wild-flowers emptied from her lap,  
Which shaking off, he brought the screamer down,  
And gaily swung her into willing arms.  
She talked these childhood memories while we strolled  
Among the scenes which bred them ; for she loved  
To dwell on things which some regard as slight :  
But in her presence, told by her own self,  
With clear apt words and satisfying voice ;  
The violet poise of her most graceful head  
Flung forth in lighted gesture to reveal  
The very fact ; her hovering white hand  
Almost in music warbling with her words,  
And bounding all the tenderest care to please ;—  
Thus choicely given, these aits of memory glow  
In hallowed splendour, and have made less dark  
A life I feel not altogether vain.

So common was her mother's lot, that who  
Can say "Like is not mine" is blessed indeed :  
For they are countless that on shades have thrown

Their passion and been chilled for evermore !  
Scarce at her bloom, and years before she met  
The destined man her husband, girllike she  
Adored a youth with sparkling genius graced,  
Who bound to great adventure spread all sail ;  
But needed ballast, working common sense,  
And meeting storms, he foundered and was lost.  
For long his fate dragged at her heart ; it drained  
Her strength ; it left her vague and desolate :  
Her life became as chill uneasy dreams  
Wherefrom we cannot break. Yet be it said,  
Lowly and truly gentle were her ways ;  
She was a tender and obedient wife,  
And in a sweet and plaintive graciousness  
Her every act performed. I trust her mind,  
Subdued by constant sadness unavowed,  
Grew clear of shadows, and at last to dwell  
Upon the future, reaching one straight path  
To Justice throned in everlasting light,  
Whose light revealed that chastisement is love.

Somewhat through lethargy ; and part the sense  
Of duty in forgetfulness of grief ;  
And something pleaded her own kindness,  
That let her take another as her lord ;  
But mostly made to yield herself and wed  
Her husband's own indomitable will :  
And having gained, he cherished her, and loved  
Her mild compliance with the strength of life.

He was a man of thews and goodly frame  
Made swart in battle. Under Indian suns  
Our foes had often there been taught to know  
That weight of arm, resistless when he closed  
Charging upon them with his sword and eye.  
But when his father died, he left the East  
For England ; here to rule his own estate,  
And reign among the county gentlemen,  
Who duly came with pride to own him chief.  
He had the kingly look of born command,  
An eagle set of eye and curve of neck ;

A cutting insight backed by solid sense ;  
Vast knowledge, and the facile use of it,  
To break obstruction, or direct the force  
Of will resolved to compass every end.  
Withal a broad and genial natured man  
Who ever kindly turned the doubtful scale  
Against himself: no tenant ever mourned  
The day when his new master came to rule ;  
Nor were old village gossips heard lament  
The good times fled with their departed lord.

Culture went hand in hand with strength in him:  
Broad-versed was he in science ; rock and soil,  
Plant, shell, bird, beast, to complex form of man,  
With something of the stars. Historic works  
He mostly read ; and oftentimes dug for trace  
Of steps long past in archæology.  
He loved the singers of our native land  
Who take our souls up to the worth of life ;  
And those deep thinkers whose conclusions show

The secret principles that work the world.  
He prized laborious Hallam ; but declared  
Carlyle half mad ; "A coil of restive thoughts,  
That touch on nothing sound or practical,  
Told in outrageous jargon, cumbersome  
As any Laplander's costume !" Which I  
In ruffled pride would always straight oppose ;  
"Sound or unsound, his word is daylight truth,  
That breeding heroes once was England's boast,  
And now we brag of making millionaires.  
Your 'practical' means shortest cut to wealth :  
But far too frequently purse robs the heart ;  
One growing heavy drains the other dry.  
His style, poetically pregnant, oft  
By note of admiration merely, hints  
More than crammed Pro Con of your favourite's page."  
At this he shouts a scornful roaring laugh,  
The table shaking, and the vessels chinked  
As fell his weighty arm : with massive gaze  
In hurly-burly sort he bantered me :

“Young bubble-dreamer, plotting stanza rhymes,  
What can you know of laws : what know of plans  
Which bound these varied interests of ours,  
Through crossing currents, fixed for certain ends,  
To frame this state we call society,  
The full outcome of immemorial time ?  
Know, here on earth wealth must not be despised,  
For we are as we are. While men subsist  
By interchanging goods and service, gold  
Will be the grease that smooths the whole machine.  
I grant a few, the greatest, live content  
To give forth what has ripened in their minds ;  
But greed alone brings each result to grow  
And spread its uses through the mass. Beside  
Where honour, reason, or instinctive life,  
Quite fails, there gold will prick the sluggard loon.  
It wakes the drowsy loungeer of the East,  
Who lolls in sunshine idle as a gourd,  
To toil like Irish hodmen. Roused, he hears  
Coin ringing lively music ; falls to work,

And digs, and hews, and grinds : he sees, not far,  
Himself, a chief of horsemen richly clad,  
Armed with long spears and silver-hilted blades,  
Seizing pachalic power by a swift blow.  
But labour, having brought him gold, brings fears :  
The weight of wealth has made his footfall staid ;  
He longs for order, settled government,  
And stands, a stern upholder, by the law.

“ I know you flout this ‘ gold materialism,’  
For what you call the ‘ gold of evening skies :’  
But let me tell you, boy, for you ’tis well  
My lands are broad and bankers true, or else  
Your maiden, she poor girl, I often think,  
Would want a crust to eat and shoes to wear.”  
Thus he, in what I called his ‘ copper-gilt,’  
For which I paid him tinsel ; “ She want shoes !  
Her feet will press the flowers of paradise,  
And, being angel, she will need no food.”  
“ Eugh ! Get your tackle, let us catch some trout.”

She never stayed a long while from her home ;  
But lived a quiet life ; contentedly  
Taking the continent and many things  
On trust ; feeling our landscapes satisfied  
Her love for scenes. When from a visit she  
Returned, no lovelier picture ever blessed  
My sight, than when she swam into his arms,  
And stood in beauty, frail, against his strength  
Supporting her, and kissed his lips and cheeks  
And brow. He then, as if his daughter yet  
Were but a child, would press the upturned head  
Between his hands, where peered the innocent face  
Rosy with smile and blush, like a sweet flower  
Bursting its tawny sheath : whereon he gazed  
A father's gaze immeasurably kind ;  
And long, in tenderness akin to pity,  
There held her, who was beautiful and good.  
And once full late in balmy summer time  
We feared the wind breathing of night had chilled  
Her tranquil mother, as we paced a walk



Leading espalier-trellised to their hall ;  
She ever heedful parted silently ,  
And flushed with sunset vanished from our gaze ;  
But we beheld her soon dawn from the porch  
In haste bringing her mother's mantle. When,  
As comes the tide-wave up an easy beach  
Played with a billowy sound and look of foam  
The thousand folds round her advancing feet,  
Her shape divine looking as great as ocean's  
Self beyond : yet no sea bird that gleams  
From the blue-arched illimitable heaven  
Could glide with airier lightness than she came  
And hung the garment round her mother's neck ;  
And then struck, womanlike, the folds in place ;  
Kissing the thankful lips, and deftly fixed  
The fastening at her throat. While pondering thus  
And patching these rich fragments, strange it seems  
What little things obtrude on my regard !  
I now remember every sculptured group,  
And painted scene, and portrait, figured vase,

Each print unique, and gem, we once beheld  
On visiting some neighbouring mansion, which  
Contained a noble gallery of Art :

The masters, by whose hands the works were wrought,  
Long mouldered into dust. Ah, well I know  
Why some have burned their symbols in my brain  
And rise before me now !

Stone-bound, Narcissus

Drooping melts into himself ; and Echo by,  
In shrunk despair, hangs envying what he wastes.

Through smouldering morning mists a glorious sun

The mountain-shoulder burns ; above, transmutes

The zenith cloudlets into airy gold ;

And deep down, seen through pure crystalline blue,

Glimmer the village, lake, and mountain range.

Superb at ease a Lady stands and smiles

Sweet welcome to the world : though centuries

Have lapsed since she approved her painter's work,

Her smile has such sincerity, all feel

They must have known her some time in their lives.

Here bossed on silver vase, a marriage train  
Moves round to music : lookers-on cast flowers  
Before the timid bending bride : meanwhile,  
Stalwart and proud, her bridegroom smiles abroad  
As at a dazzling sun : the pipers blow,  
The harpers twang, the cymbals clash, youths sing ;  
Six maidens walk behind to hold her veil,  
One pair are sad, the next look vain, and two  
Prettily whisper secrets to themselves.  
Here from old paper stands, and looks of men  
The manliest, and king of English kings,  
The lion Cromwell, in his dress of war :  
Beneath him coils a monster welling blood,  
Whose severed heads stretch round in scattered gleam  
Of mitre jewelled, coronet and crown.  
Sharp cut on gem, set in a thick gold ring,  
The size and roundness of a lady's nail,  
Love bleeding on the dart himself doth point ;  
Who thus had died, had not with tenderest touch  
Immortal Psyche held the anguished heart.

Fast to her own, and purified the pain,  
And fanned him with her wings.

And now, as then,  
Along those hushed rich corridors we moved,  
Poring each masterpiece we favoured most,  
And would no longer stay, but felt some chance  
Must serve us for the rest: musing, I pass  
From scene to scene of My Dear Lady's life,  
And leave my other memories undisturbed.

Beneath this airy sapphire's brooding rest,  
Its shadows overcast me with a chill  
Like coming storm, that black calamity  
Which struck and took our Darling from their charge  
And mine. Grief stupefied us all. At once  
The childless mother lost her wavering strength,  
And lay prostrated; never tasting life  
On earth again! Beside her husband sat  
And watched her fading; saw the last poor smile  
Wane from her features; till the closing eyes

Lit into tearful rapture ; when he knew  
Love's immortality to her revealed.  
With both her own she mutely clasped his hand,  
And held it in most gentle pressures fixed :  
But when the tender grasp relaxed and fell,  
The world closed round him to a stony blank.

And now was stricken down the mighty man ;  
As the ripe harvest levelled by a storm  
At morningtide ; which, ere sun warmth anew  
Can flatter into strength, a second storm  
O'erwhelms and scattereth to waste at even.

When that torpidity which follows pain  
Through strangeness passed to natural regard  
For daily wants ; his vacant home he loathed :  
His spacious garden grounds ; his lake ; his woods ;  
The breezy air ; the overhanging heaven,  
He loathed : he loathed them all. When spring aroused  
The amorous songsters of the copse and field

To seasonable joy, their music mocked  
His sadness with its echoes, babbling tales  
Of what had been : and he, in bitterness,  
Resolved to quit a place where every turn  
Stood like a foe, whose settled leering eye  
In silence gloared with hope to mark his fall ;  
And left our country. Far, in Eastern climes,  
His nation serving, there he fought and died :  
And never had a nobler man upheld  
The majesty of England's worth and name.

Long toil-devoted years have gloomed and shone  
Since these events closed up my doors of life.  
Partly from choice, and part necessity,  
With constancy have I sustained and urged  
The work it was my duty to advance.  
For, when my vision cleared again, I looked  
And saw how mean a thing was man, who used  
The produce of his fellows' energies  
And gave back nothing.

Then my spirit saw

This Island race two thousand years ago  
In simple savagery, controlled by priests  
More fell and bloody than the wolves that howled  
At midnight round their monstrous altar-stones,  
Scenting the sacrificial human blood.  
Saw girt with legions lynx-eyed Cæsar come  
To taste of Briton's valour. When appeared  
Legions succeeding legions, and the swarms  
Marshalled by skilful discipline had fallen  
To tributaries of all-conquering Rome.  
Saw when Rome's grip, through fierce luxurious guilt,  
Could hold no longer ; and with tattered plume  
Her eagles left her slaves to stem or tide  
The hungry Pict incursions as they could.  
Next when a burly genial race here raised  
The White Horse Standard : men who wrought the soil  
Till yellow corn, responsive, sunned the plains.  
When lured by booty, Ravens from the North  
Bent hitherward : stiffly the contest tugged

Long years ; till both the wearied champions joined  
Their hands, as common home to share the Isle.  
With peace the land grew fat ; and wholesome bonds  
Of nobles to their kings, and serfs to them,  
Fell slackened or distorted to misrule ;  
When Norman William, hard as rocks and fierce  
As fire, with charge of mailed horse and showers  
Of steel, won England. Her rough sons he drilled  
Grimly : by stern command and strength of sword  
He forced obedience where he fixed a law.  
For ages long against men's stubborn minds,  
With give and take, the bold Plantagenets  
Kept up the drill. At length the race, now grown  
By constant wrestle into thews of power,  
Moved calm with strength beneath the Tudor's sway.  
And then a Northern Stuart wore their crown,  
Whose son, unmindful he was over men  
Truth-lovers, lied to them and lost his head ;  
For Puritans held no respect for lies.  
Next flared Charles Satyr's saturnalia



Of Lely Nymphs, who panting sung "More gold;  
We yield our beauties freely ; gold, more gold."  
Hapless explosions, folly, frenzied plots ;  
Till well coerced by Lowland William's craft.  
Then plans that led to naught, or worse, enforced  
By Marlborough's cannon thundering over-seas.  
Then through the Guelphic line ; our race now grows  
To that great power which is to sway the world.

Down from those human shambles, wolf-belapt,  
To when, in pardonably grand excess  
Of pity, through our people's will was bought  
Free indolence for Isles of Western slaves :  
And now, when thousands blandly would deny  
The proven murderer his rope, the thief  
Due chastisement ; and when a General  
May blunder troops to death, yea, and receive  
His Senate's vote of thanks and all made smooth ;  
And when, as much from universal trust  
In other states' goodwill as from the pinch

Of blinking parsimony, we our fleets  
Let rot, and regiments shrink to skeletons.—  
From those fell rights to such urbanity  
The march indeed is long ; and kindly freaks  
May sometimes clamour Justice from her throne ;  
Yet gentleness is still a noble gain,  
And we will trust such freaks are nobly meant.

To touch the power we hold, what work has been  
Of vigorous brawn, and keen contriving brains !  
Stout men with mighty battle in their limbs ;  
Thinkers, whose cunning struck beyond the strength  
Of hosts ; priests sworn to God, whose daily lives  
Preached gospel purity and kindliness ;  
Wise chroniclers, whose patience garnered facts  
For present want and food for coming time ;  
And dames who made their homes a paradise,  
And kept their husbands great ;—have greatly given  
The light and choicest substance of their lives  
For generations mingling each with each,

Wave multitudinously urging wave,  
Toward the one great broadening flow of things,  
Then passed into the gloom that swallows all.

Could I dwell here in our proud Island Home,  
Preserved by countless victories ; made strong  
By kings and kingly councillors ; enriched  
By artisans, whose skill surpassed all men's ;  
And by such wondrous song immortalized  
It glorifies mankind : and how could I  
Here feed on this accumulated wealth,  
Like senseless swine on acorns of the wood,  
And own no wish to render thanks in kind ?  
Surely there could be found some waste wild flower  
To yield one honey-drop that I might drain  
To swell the general hive !

At last resolved  
Out to its utmost spray my force should strive,  
And bring to fruit its yet unopened buds,

I, craving gracious aid of Heaven, straightway  
Began the work which shall be mine till death.  
And if 'tis granted that I may disroot  
Some evil weeds; or plant a seed, which time  
Shall nourish to a tree of pleasant shade,  
To wearied limbs a boon, and fair to view;  
I then shall know the Hand that struck me down  
Has been my guide into the paths of truth.

And She, my lost adored One, where is She?  
Where has She been throughout these dragging years  
Of labour?

She has been my light of life!  
The lustrous dawn and radiance of the day  
At noon: and She has burned the colours in  
To richer depths across the sun at setting:  
And my tired lids She closes: then, in dreams,  
Descends a shaft of glory barred with stairs  
And leads my spirit up where I behold

My dear ones lost. And thus through sleep, not death,  
Remote from earthly cares and vexing jars,  
I taste the stillness of the life to come.

What time his scythe in misty summer morns  
With cheery ring the mower whets ; and kine  
Move slowly, breathing sweetness, toward the pail  
Their milking-maid is jingling, as she calls  
“ Hi Strawberry and Blossom, hither Cows ;”  
While slung against the upland with his team  
The ploughman dimly like a phantom glides :  
What time that noisy spot of life, the lark  
Climbs, shrill with ecstasy, the trembling air ;  
And “ Cuckoo, Cuckoo,” baffling whence it comes,  
Shouts the blithe egotist who cries himself ;  
And every hedge and coppice sings : What time  
The lover, restless, through his waking dream,  
Nigh wins the hoped-for great unknown delight,  
Which never comes to flower, maybe ; elsewhere,  
The worshipped Maid, a folded rose o’er-rosed

By rosy dawn, asleep lies breathing smiles :  
Then ofttime through the emptied London streets,  
When every house is closed and spectral still,  
And, save the sparrow chirping from the tower  
Where tolls the passing time, all sounds are hushed ;  
Then walk I pondering on the ways of fate,  
And file the past before me in review,  
Counting my losses and my treasured gains,  
And feel I lost a glory such as man  
Can never know but once : but how there sprung  
From out the chastening wear of grief, a scope  
Of sobered interest bent on vaster ends  
Than hitherto were mine ; and sympathies  
For struggling souls, that each held dear within  
A sacred meaning, known or unrevealed :—  
And these, in their complexities and far  
Relations with the sum of general power  
Which is the living world, now are my gain ;  
And grant my spirit from this widened truth  
A glimpse of that high duty claimed of all.

How wildly flares the West about the sun,  
Now fallen low ! And as one, nameless, sails,  
Lost deep in witching reverie, along  
A silent river ; passing villages  
Busy with toil ; flowered banks and shadowy coves,  
And cattle browsing peaceful in the meads ;  
Who only wakes to consciousness, when full  
A burst of sunshine from the sinking orb  
Smiting the flood first strikes his dazzled sight ;—  
So I am here recalled to where I stand  
By yon red sun-light flaming up the spire,  
And vane that sparkles in the warm blue heaven,  
And that remembered bell tolling the hour.

Now on the broad mysterious ocean leans  
The sailor o'er his vessel's side, and feels  
The buzzing joys of home ; and wondering thinks  
If fate will let him end his being there.  
Now pleased the housewife down the path descries  
Her husband's footsteps hitherward ; his meal

Prepared, the children each made tidy ; she  
With smiling comfort means to soothe her man,  
By labour wearied, through the evening hours.  
They whirl their life web, humming like a wheel,  
These airy insects. Birds have ceased to sing,  
But twitter faintly, settling to their rest ;  
And not a rook's caw rends the placid air.  
I now must part ; but ere I go, will kneel  
To kiss this ivy—modest earthly type,  
That would with constant verdure grace her name,  
As I enshroud her memory with my love !  
For She has been the blessing that has nerved  
My strength in failing hours of blackest night,  
When doubts oppress and fears distract ; and when  
Gigantic Evil's hoofs are crushing good,  
And pity burns in terror ; while, appalled,  
Blanched justice shrinks aloof ; and not a voice,  
The smallest, dares uplift itself against  
The dripping blood-red horror which pollutes  
With death and danger, heaven and earth and sea ;



When men's belief grows wild, seeing alone  
The dreadful black abominable sin,  
Forgetful that the light still shines beyond ;  
And doubting last the very truth of God,  
They hate their fellow creatures and themselves ;  
Groaning beneath a Despot, who thinks less  
Of precious human blood, than shipwrights count  
Of water in the dock, so many feet  
Will bear so many tons, if it but aid  
One little step his brutalizing aims,  
Who as an armed thief sacks his people's wealth.  
Then shines My Love's star-brightness thro' the gloom ;  
And comes, as comes a glorious Conqueror  
Returning from that Despot's overthrow,  
His brow yet flashed and pale with victory :  
Whose prowess long withstood the charging shocks  
Of hosts that swarmed ; who, baffling with his skill  
Their cunning combinations, in good time  
Closed his own force, and wrought them utmost woe ;  
Smashed the huge liners of the hostile fleet,

Their swiftest frigates sank to watery hell :  
Others he scared like fowls ; and trailed the rest  
In foamed victorious wake, a captured prize,  
Where thronged his people stand in proud acclaim  
Of "Welcome, Welcome, Welcome ! To our hearts  
O Saviour of thy country ! to our hearts  
O Father of thy people ! welcome back !"  
And shout in exultation his dear name ;  
Who moves through storms of music, and beholds  
Gay seas of faces tossed with happiness,  
And lit through rapture into wondering awe.  
And as that grateful multitude forgets  
Whatever wrong he may have done, do I  
My scathing sorrows, and embrace the good.

And when, in after years, that honoured One  
Returns at last unto his native land,  
From having wrought his last great victory,  
A solemn corpse ; in state his people close,  
Solemnly to do honour to the dead,

And stand in silence, mid the mournful sway  
Of martial music wailing he is gone  
Who saved them from the shackles they abhorred ;  
And in all reverence, with tenderest hands,  
And tearful eyes, and hearts that burn and throb,  
They lower their consecrated Hero down,  
Down sinking slowly to his lasting rest :  
Whose glory rises to a settled star  
Lighting the land he loved for evermore.  
So comes my love to me : its glorious light  
Yet hovers sacredly, and guides me on  
To grander prospects, and more noble use  
Of powers entrusted me. Henceforth my soul  
Will never lack a spot whither to flee,  
When crowding evils war to shake my faith  
In righteousness : for thinking of Her life  
Made up of gracious acts and sweet regards,  
Compassionately tender ; and enshrined  
In such a form, that oft to my fond eyes  
She seemed divine : and I could scarce withhold

My wonder Heaven could spare Her to a world  
So stained as ours. And now, whatever come  
Of wrong and bitterness to break my strength;  
Whatever darkness fate may plunge me in;  
A ray has pierced me from the highest heaven—  
I have believed in worth; and do believe.

## II

### WORK

SWEET is the moisture of the trellis-rose  
Dripping in music down through glistening leaves ;  
And sweeter still its fragrance that we breathe  
On throwing wide our lattice to the morn.  
Sweet seeing thrushes bright-eyed speckle-bosomed,  
Search dew-gray lawns with keen inspective glance ;  
And rabbits nimbly nibble tender grasses  
Or pause when startled at each other's shade.  
Joyous when orchard boughs bend low with fruit,  
And golden joy the mounded harvest wains  
Mid singing hedgerows gliding smoothly by.  
'Tis fair to watch hung pale in milky azure  
Mist slowly closing into wandering cloud

Driven by the clean and light elastic wind ;  
And through that lone harmonious sunshine hum  
Of unseen life mark how the floating seeds  
Pass like flown fancies out beyond regard.

But sweeter than all roses, sights of birds,  
Richer than fruit, more than whole lands of corn,  
Fairer than glories of the brightest day,  
Dearer than any old familiar sound  
Of childhood hours, than every glittering joy  
Thrown from the teeming fountain of the earth,  
Is our impulsive answer to the call  
Of Duty.

To such as would be something more  
Than they who feast to laugh and die, the voice  
Of Duty is the signal note of war,  
Nerving their spirits to great enterprise,  
And knitting every sinew for the charge.  
It makes them quit a happy silvan life  
For contest in the grim metropolis,

And in its ever-widening roar stand firm  
And fixed amid the thunder, foot to foot  
With opposition, smiting for the truth.  
To such the rage of battle charms beyond  
The heaviest ocean-plunges dashed on cliffs,  
The tempest's fury on the grinding woods,  
Or elemental crashing in the heavens :  
Beyond a lover's gladness when he feels  
His maiden's bosom throbbing tremulously,  
Beyond a father's when he feels in hand  
The rounded warmth of little firstborn's limb,  
Or in beholding him grown tall and strong :  
And their delight will never wane, but wax  
In greatness with the roll of time, and burn  
More brightly fed with noble deeds. For souls  
Obedient to divine impulse, who urge  
Their force in steadfastness until the rocks  
Be hewn of their obstruction, till the swamp's  
Insatiability be choked and bound  
A hardened road for traffic and disport,

Till giant arches stride across the flood,  
Till tortured earth release its mysteries  
Which straight become slaves pliant unto man,  
Till labours at the desk at length result  
In law : who pondering on the stars proclaim  
Their size and distance and pursue their course ;  
Who work whatever will give greater power  
Or profit man with leisure to observe  
The wondrous heavens and loveliness of earth ;  
Who will instruct him in the truths whereby  
He learns to reverence more his fellow man ;  
Who point his spirit to the worshipping  
Imperishable things, from which he comes  
To scorn the fluttering vanities of wealth  
As poisoned sweets and baubles should they dim  
His eyes one instant to that awful light  
Wherein he moves ; who do and who have done  
All that has ever aided man to free  
Himself, imperfectly, from grosser self  
And made his seeing pure :—such souls sublime



Will never want for blessed joy in work,  
Working for Duty which can never die.

Men may seem playthings of ironic fate :  
One stoutly shod paces a velvet sward ;  
And one is forced with naked feet to climb  
Sharp slaty ways alive with scorpions,  
While wolfish hunger strains to catch his throat ;  
One drinks his purple draught, smacks lip and laughs,  
One shuddering tastes his bitter cup and groans ;  
But there is hope for all. Though not for all  
To sail through sunny ripples to the end  
Chatting of shipwrecks as pathetic tales ;  
All are not born to nurse the dainty pangs  
That herald love's completion, and behold  
Their darlings flourish in the tempered air  
Of comfort till themselves become the springs  
Of a yet milder race : all are not born  
To touch majestic eminence and shine  
Directing spirits in their nations' sight

And radiate unformed posterity :  
But through transcendent mercy all are born  
To enter on a nobler heritage  
Than these, if each but wills to rightly choose  
In serving Duty, man's prerogative :  
Which is far pleasanter than paths of flowers,  
Than warmest clustering of household joys,  
And prouder than the proudest shouts of fame  
That follow actions not in conscience wrought.

Fair Duty, most unlike the blight of death,  
Whose dismal presence levels men to ruin,  
Lifts up his nature into rarer life.  
Hers is a broad estate open to poor  
And rich alike : here rudest peasant may  
Move as their equal with baronial lords,  
And those who serve be great as those who rule :  
Here a smirched artisan who merely bolts  
The plates of iron fortress, breathes the pride  
Of that trained chieftain who commands its guns ;

And one that points or fires a single piece  
Claims honour with the mind who planned the war.

Fair Duty, hard and perilous to serve,  
Exacts devotion that is absolute  
Ere she reveals the full heaven of her smile,  
And gnaws with misery the traitor slave  
Who having known her countenance and moved  
At her behest relapses into sloth,  
Or vies to flaunt in pampered vanities,  
Or drudges serf to his own base desires :—  
Sworn knight, and armed with mail and sword of proof,  
But coaxing brutish ignorance with praise,  
And with the wasted hearts of honest men  
Gorging the monster he went forth to slay.  
But they who faithfully revere her law  
As primal, and of every want supreme,  
Making edged danger discipline their strength,  
Transmuting hindrance to accomplished deed,  
Fair Duty dowers with her celestial love,

From which the mystic blessing glory grows ;  
And glory born of Duty is a crown  
Of light.

And all thus crowned illumine their work  
In splendour that no earthly eye may pierce,  
And know that every seed they set, and stone  
They fix, and truth they reach, unite to found  
A well-planned city in a governed land  
That rising bases high a Temple built  
Firm in its centre to the praise of God.  
And each beholds his labours glorified,  
Alike the toiler at a desk, the king  
Upon his throne, or builder of the bridge :  
The desk in lustre shines a kingly throne,  
The throne diffuses radiance like a sun,  
The bridge spans death—a pathway to the stars.

MARCH, 1865.





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Woolner, Thomas  
My beautiful lady

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